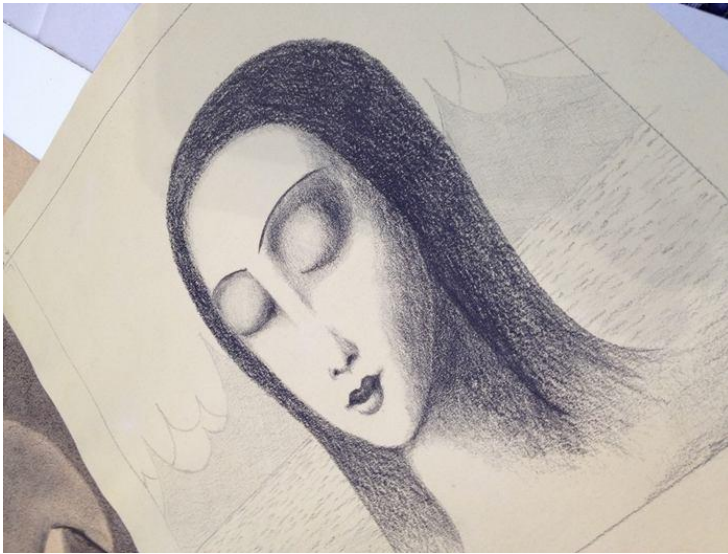


A trio from Prague was selling forgeries of famous masters

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The trio succeeded to sell 42 forgeries, photo: police of Czech Republic

Prague – a trio of forgers who sold or tried to sell 87 forgeries was arrested on Wednesday in Prague. According to the police, the group of forgers gained 876.000 CZK from the distribution of 45 fake paintings. They tried to sell 42 more paintings for nearly one million CZK. All of them are facing up to eight years in prison. The members of the group were a couple from Brno (a woman 49 years old and a man 33 years old) and a 37 years old woman from Ostrava region. According to the spokeswoman for the police in Hradec Králové Ivana Ježková, the

couple took advantage of a difficult situation of the third member who was a homeless.

„They lend her money and offered to take care of her daughter. Later they were living together in Prague. The woman realized soon that their help is not for free,“ said the spokeswoman.

According to the instructions of the couple she started to offer and sell high-quality fakes of well-known Czech artists from the 20th century.

„She was obtaining artpieces provided with signatures of deceased authors from the couple. Besides the copies she was offering some completely new pieces which she presented as non-discovered and unseen so far. From the beginning she was aware of the fact that all of them were fake,“ noted Mrs. Ježková.

For example, she pretended that the offered painting is a part of a heritage and she necessarily needs money for a sick member of the family. She was also saying that she needs money to pay a rent otherwise she would be moved out of her flat.

The buyers were worried about harming their reputation

„If the buyer believed, he paid the artpiece in cash. The price was, according to the name of the author, between thousands and tens of thousands CZK.

The buyers realized later that they bought a forgery but very often they didn't contact the police. According to Mrs. Ježková, they were worried about harming their reputation. The first who announced the fraud to the police was an antiquarian from the region Hradec Králové. After this announcement, the criminal police started the investigation.

The woman from Ostrava region was accused of a fraud, the couple from Brno is accused of a participation on the fraud. All of them are facing the same penalty – up to eight years in prison. The woman from Brno is now in the prison due to another crime.

„She was comanded to the prison,“ added the spokeswoman. The police recommended the accused be held in custody pending a trial..

Source: <http://aktualne.centrum.cz/domaci/regiony/praha/clanek.phtml?id=781832>